

MANIFESTO: SOCIAL MEDIA SQUAD

PLAN

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Reading note: complete version in black, **shorter version in red.**

I) The Creation of the Social Media Squad

First, it is important to us to tell you more about the authors* of this manifesto (i.e. us, *Social Media Squad* team as you may read on www.socialmediasquad.cc).

We met around common interests and topics:

- a. we all worked or contributed to projects aiming at tackling issues mainly in the social or environmental fields, as volunteers (**MakeSense, Impact**), as well as founders of non-profit initiatives (**JerryDIT, BBmakers Tour**);
- b. we worked with digital communication tools, as professionals in the field of online networks animation and social media analysis and strategy (for **Wildfire.asia, Hedera technology, danone.communities, Le Vélo Voyageur, JobIRL**);
- c. we all lived from half a year to three year-long experiences abroad, as students then professionals, in Eastern Europe and Asia (China, Bangladesh, Slovenia) with strong personal stories to tell each others.

From those encounters, we had our first common actions together — sharing our know-how about social media, alongside a bunch of volunteers, we gave live-coverage of the Global Social Business Summit in Malaysia late 2013, in order to help promote such initiatives.

Encouraged by some professionals and fellows*, **we ended up creating a legal structure in August 2014.**

We chose a **co-operative legal structure and governance** so that each associate is able to express his individual views and needs (including those related to private life), share all key responsibilities of the organisation (vision, economic, and ethical viability), thus continuously striving to grow our project in a balanced and sustainable way.

After a bit more than one year of existence, we had completed 33 paid projects (more information about them in part II).

Step by step, we have assessed our common values and shaped our way of working both internally and externally. We describe it in paragraph II.

*thank you Olivier Maurel, Gayané Adourian

II) Our way: values, stance and vision

Some say “the end justifies the means”. Though our goal and mission are important to give meaning and sense to what we do, we also believe that “the means” are just as important since they are what impact us in our everyday life.

In that respect, before developing on what we do, we want to tell you more about how we work together on an everyday basis.

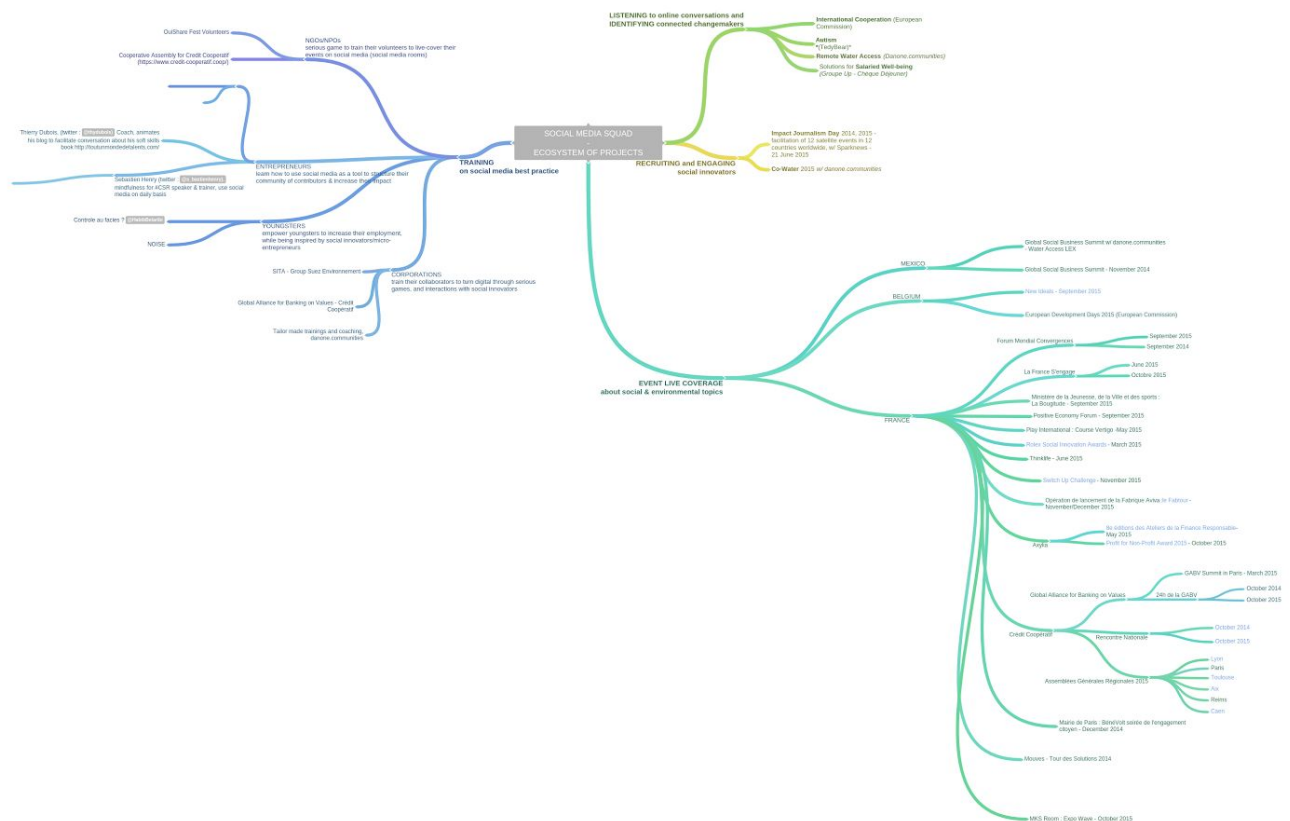
Our model: a co-operative (*legal document available on our website*).

WHO

Today, we are organised around 3 circles of stakeholders:

- Associates or “senseis” that build the vision and take care of the economic and ethical viability of the co-operative (read our “guidelines for associates” document). We follow the “one person, one voice” principle to take any strategical decision. We don’t use majority votes and vetoes; we use debate and unanimous decisions. We are five associates.
- Freelances or “ninjas” are regularly hired in our projects for their specific talents in sketching, graphic design, creative web development, poetry, copywriting, photography, video, etc. So far we have worked with about sixty freelances.
- Volunteers or “padawans” from other associations, or NGOs, are occasionally invited to cover events to bring more individual voices in the online debate (in exchange we offer them free training, negotiate free entrances, and VIP seats to the event, access to conferences and workshops, if they are interested).

FOR WHOM (*see our “ecosystem of projects” on our website*)



Our clients and beneficiaries: from associations' volunteers (Passeport Avenir), micro-entrepreneurs (Singa Project), social innovation networks (Mouves, Ashoka), corporations' social business projects (danone.comunities), to public institutions (European Commission, French Ministry of Youth).

Our clients are primarily “social enterprises” that seek to build economically sustainable strategies to maximize improvements in human and environmental well-being.

Nowadays, they are also sometimes called “active citizens”, “changemakers”, “social innovators”, “social entrepreneurs”, “social business”, etc.

To meet our ends, we sometimes need to work with organisations that do not fall into our scope of action. Then we usually find a way to connect them to end beneficiaries within our scope of action as part of the services we can offer them.

WHAT

We help leverage social media as a tool to help social or environmental initiatives savvily increase their visibility, communicate better and connect with the relevant contributors to build sustainable cooperation.

We have been leveraging softwares, developing methodologies that aim at:

- a. better emphasizing the needs and motivations of individuals, thus better showing the opportunities of cooperation on a given social, environmental, or cultural topic;
- b. facilitating their cooperations through participatory editorial processes and tools;
- c. empowering individuals with playful training that help increase their autonomy* in practicing online communication.

More details about what we produce in paragraph III.

HOW:

The dynamics and attitudes that make us move forward, co-create and learn in our co-operative:

(i) Pleasure, creativity and humor:

- a. Internally, each time we bring in a new project in our company, as associates, we discuss on a weekly basis which projects we would like to be in charge of (meaning client-partner relationship, project delivery, according to objectives and standards), according to what we both like most or what we want to learn, and where we have the most methodological or technical knowledge. To keep on delivering qualitative projects, we always organize ourselves in a “duo by project”: meaning there is a teammate associate that will co-produce on a given project without being in charge of the client relationship, thus completing the knowledge or energy needed to work serenely.

- b. Externally, we create games about social media practice as tools to spread our knowledge and know-how about the social media landscape and challenges nowadays. So far, we created one free* card game available to all (lien) and one board game about social media



(ii) Sincerity, Transparency, Openness:

Today, transparency is mainly present within our co-operative by taking into account our individual needs:

- we share economic resources equally, proportionally to the amount of time we put into the projects of the co-operative (same hour-rate for any associate, after having paid all our freelances, suppliers, costs and taxes)
- any person working in the company (associate or not) has access anytime to the gains, losses, and bank account sheet of the company
- once a month, we run a team meeting to discuss what animates us collectively and individually. We then translate the new collective and individual needs into an action plan (including a projection of minimum and ideal salaries wanted, new things we want to learn, matters we want to drop out, vision we don't share or wish to develop, etc).

Projection: our goal is to turn from a traditional co-operative, as we now are (mid-January 2016) with only the associates being in charge of economic and ethical viability, into an **open co-operative** with three circles all actively taking part in key decision processes:

- a. the **producers**: us
- b. the **beneficiaries**: our clients and their end-beneficiaries*, as well as the volunteers we occasionally invite through sister associations
- c. the **partners**: the freelancers we work with regularly, the organisations willing to co-create with us by sharing knowledge, know-how and methodologies

This may probably induce a change in our legal structure (we are thinking of the SCIC in France). That decision will also imply opening up more and more of our decision-tracking online tools, financial transparency and making new open-source methodologies freely* available to all.

*definition of free as per in free software [link to wikipedia]

(iii) **Experimentation**

Internally, key decisions on ethical and economic viability are taken together by consensus (no vote, no veto, just unanimity) between each associate of the co-operative, every week during our workflow meetings, every month during our HR and strategy meetings, and every six months during our vision retreats. We validate and track them on an online decision-tracking platform (we recommend www.loomio.org).

Thus, **we confront our views by discussing, finding new consensus and we evolve towards more individual and collective autonomy.**

Externally, we are **open to co-create** with quite anyone in our scope of interest, as long as we have agreed on a **long-term, sustainable approach**, and that our needs for inward and outward **autonomy** are respected.

WHY: We believe that our autonomy* as individuals and our ability to be a part of and to leverage collective intelligence are key for us to move forward. Our autonomy helps us develop ourselves creatively and sustainably, participate in the solving of the important issues of our times at a local scale with what we have learned from global knowledge.

In that respect, **we believe that smartly leveraging social media tools can help individuals participate in the solving of local issues with global knowledge: facilitate how we communicate, share knowledge, co-create meaningful cooperations.**

WHERE: Since the creation of our co-operative in August 2014, we have worked mainly in France, but also in Belgium (European Development Days 2015) and Mexico (Global Social Business Summit 2014).

This is how we see our development:

- a. small (<12 individuals) to keep strong human interactions internally and remain very agile externally
- b. respectful to others' autonomy: so we do not want to develop a centralised structure, but we rather aim at a distributed one, meaning we don't want to open and manage other offices worldwide and take responsibility beyond the members of our team;
- c. open to innovation and co-creation: meaning we would rather train other structures to do the same things as us (selling trainings of our methodologies and tools), and let them develop themselves in their local context abroad (that they know better than us) rather than owning a new office abroad and managing it ourselves.

All in all, we want to avoid centralised interactions and wish to develop “glocal” co-operations.

WHEN: Our “duo per project model” and our small organisation allow us to work all year long, as long as we sustain our economic and ethical viability. So far, so good.

Now that you know more about the way we proceed, let's talk about what we do.

** we here use the following definition of “autonomy” as found in wikipedia: “capacity of a rational individual to make an informed, un-coerced decision”*

III) “From authentic conversation to meaningful cooperation”

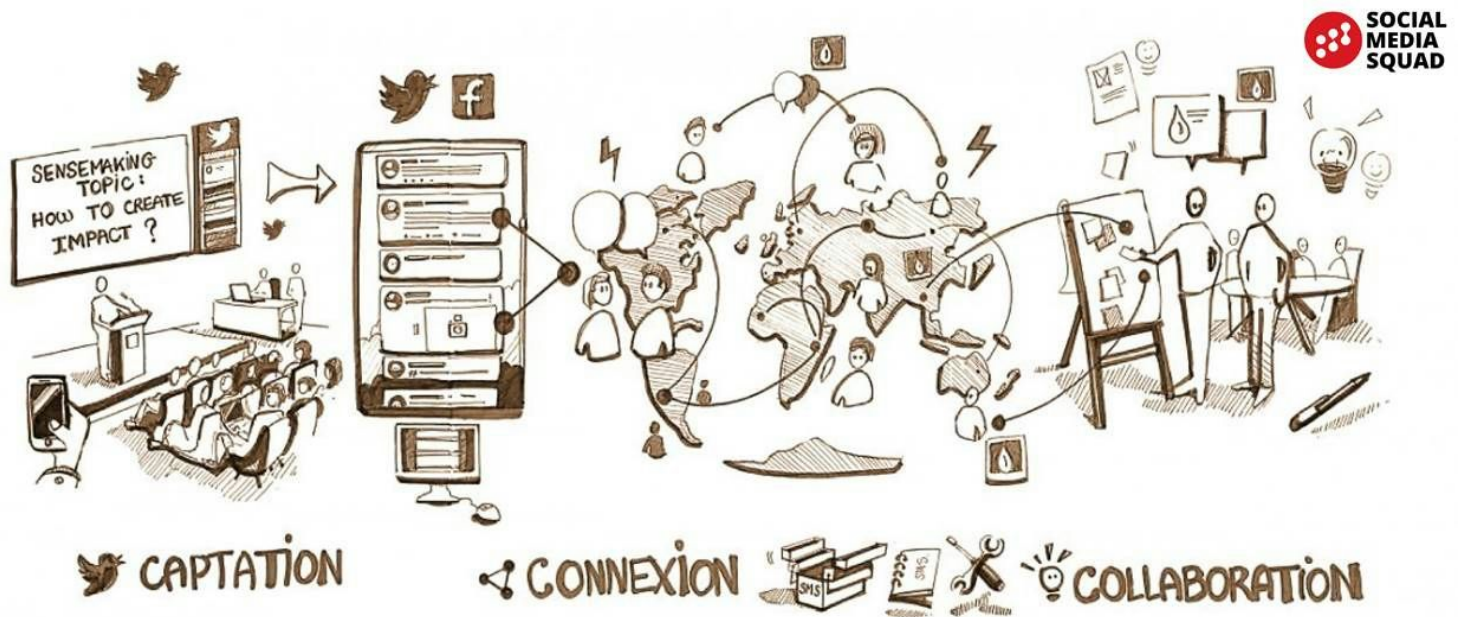
We have heard a lot of things about the recent “revolution of communication” means, at a global level, and the way it would have empowered individuals worldwide to become a media themselves (from “one to many” to “many to many”).

If, in theory, the Internet has the technological infrastructure to enable the happening of such a situation, the reality often shows the occurrence of different phenomena.

One of the reasons, we believe, is the fast development of popular social network services (such as Facebook, Twitter, etc) that have attracted many of us willing to directly communicate with the rest of the world; though their full potential has been mainly exploited by communication agencies and their clients (brands) through their planned promotional campaigns. Long story short, **most have been mainly copy-pasting the traditional advertising and PR models into the online social media world:** respectively banner-ads, pay-per-click, and bloggers to celebrities who monetize their circle of attention (their many “followers”). Of course, that has been proposed and facilitated by the technical and functional infrastructure proposed by those popular platforms.

At Social Media Squad, we recognize that we evolve in that context and are to some extent submitted to that kind of logic consciously or not.

Yet **we do support another kind of logic, that aims at leveraging social media as a tool to connect individuals both locally and globally, so as to share knowledge, know-how, behavioural practice and increase one’s autonomy to consciously, positively transform our lives.**



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Drawing by Stephen Rater for Social Media Squad

- translation: "captation" is "capturing content", "connexion" if for "connecting"

On the one hand, when implementing an online communication strategy, our logics is to work on:

- a. **LISTENING to public online conversations** thanks to data visualisation softwares and analysis that help us **identify needs and opportunities around a specific social, environmental or cultural topic** (*read slideshare on our website*);
- b. **CONNECTING individuals** who are actively, regularly creating (unpaid) content online around a dedicated topic, just because they have a strong interest in it (*read slideshare on our website*);
- c. **DISCUSSING**, by encouraging individuals (and not just brands) to talk in participatory editorial processes (slideshare events live coverage), especially during events;
- d. **HIGHLIGHTING common opportunities and proposing angles for a first cycle of cooperation** thanks to: participatory storytelling, formatting of the knowledge-sharing (rich content), visualisations.

In this way, we believe we can help kickstart open and inclusive cooperations, both at local and global levels.

On the other hand, it is important to us to not create a dependency for our beneficiaries, but rather train them to use our tools step-by-step.

That is why we have been developing **TRAINING** or:

- a. associations and NGOs volunteers: based on our free methodology of live social media rooms during events (a collective editorial process)
- b. social entrepreneurs and micro-entrepreneurs: collective trainings to both meet their need for creating their ecosystem of contributors and projects to test and grow sustainably, and their economic and HR constraints
- c. youngsters: in order to help them find jobs and/or opportunities more easily in our new societies, pairing them with social or environmental projects to gain community animation and editorial skills on a real life, inspiring case
- d. multinational corporations: to train their collaborators for their “transition to digital” with a pedagogical engineering involving innovative micro-entrepreneurs to create new synergies at the same time (towards open innovation)

By doing so, **we are aware we propose different offers to the one usually promoted in the communication industry.**

We will also be glad to show you that, for equal money investment, we can provide more consistent and more sustainable results in favour of your organisation’s development.

Looking forward to talking with you (face-to-face ;)

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